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Air curtain burner reopens for beetle-infested trees and noxious weeds

The Town of Estes Park's air curtain burner, located at 666 Elm Road, will reopen July 18. Operation of the burner was suspended June 19 in response to the Estes Valley Fire Protection District's open burning ban and the extreme fire danger in the area.

The Town advises that unless there is a wildfire risk or the potential exists to become a hazard by falling, trees should not be cut now due to the risk of attracting bark beetles to nearby healthy trees. Trees that have already been felled are accepted at the air curtain burner site from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Individuals who need to dispose of noxious weeds may bring them to the site in paper bags on Fridays only. No plastic bags are accepted.

To qualify for burning, trees must have no pine needles, be stripped of all branches and cut into sections no longer than three feet. Only trees affected by pine beetles within the Estes Valley will be accepted. The site will not take stumps, slash, pine needles, or branches with needles. There is no charge for disposal of the weeds and trees, but preparation and transport must be handled by the property owner or a private contractor.

It is not advised to cut any trees now, as the mountain pine beetles have begun to fly, seeking new host trees in the Estes Valley. Bark beetle behavior is often regulated by pheromones with a chemical composition similar to conifer resins. Freshly cut timber can attract beetles. The Town advises that unless wildfire risk or falling tree hazards present an immediate concern, tree-cutting should be done after the bark beetle flight period has ended. The infestation of new trees will likely continue through September.

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The Town's Beetle Busters are a mostly volunteer team who perform landowner education, inspections of properties and identification of brood trees in the Estes Park area. However, in consideration of the possible risk of cutting trees at this time, Beetle Buster inspections have been suspended until mid-October. Requests for inspections may be made after October 15 by calling the Town of Estes Park Public Works Department at 970-577-3587. Town of Estes Park landowners are required by ordinance to remove and destroy infested trees to help mitigate the epidemic.

For more information, contact the Town of Estes Park Public Works Department at 970-577-3587. To receive Town news in your email inbox, please email townadmin@estes.org.

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